

Fifty years with the International Journal of Sport Psychology: From the history of sport psychology to its actual pathways

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Fifty years after its appearance as the very first journal specifically committed to sport psychology, the International Journal of Sport Psychology (IJSP) is today a well reputed and well established scientific journal. Aimed at both researchers and practitioners, the papers published are often not just of academic interest, but also have practical applications too.

After the first special issue looking back at the history of sport psychology, with this second issue we are interested to reflect about contemporary sport psychology and the actual role of the IJSP as a peer reviewed journal publishing and circulating research findings and theoretical speculation from sport psychologist over five continents (both scientists and practitioners) to learn from and build upon.

The aim of this second special issue is than to underline how the historical background showed in the previous issue leaded sport psychology toward actual pathways, focusing on some new trends of research, as well as on the reorientation of some classic topics according to the society changes. Through the contribution of some invited scholars, the present issue would make a point trying to understand what changes sport psychology is facing, or has to face, in relation to some main issues. Sports psychology, like other disciplines, is influenced by cultural, technological and social changes, which open the way to new opportunities and new challenges that professionals must take into account. These changes have generated a multiplicity of innovative approaches

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in terms of diagnostic and training tools, target audience, analysis of social environment and cultural context, and public health initiatives.

Specifically, a consideration is needed when looking at the evolution of the intervention techniques which sport psychologists are called to undertake both because of the evolution of the sport itself, and also because the latest pandemic event that imposed the adaptation of the daily work activities. In the context of psychological intervention, Christopher Mesagno, Denise M. Hill, Karl Steptoe, and Daniel J. Brown reviewed the recent literature to highlight the need of interventions that facilitate sports performances. Specifically, the authors put in contrast the psychological skills training strategies that promote the reduction of unwanted psychological experiences versus more contemporary approaches that aim to increase acceptance and flexibility as a proxy for optimal performance. The authors wisely conclude their article offering future research directions focusing on the emerging theme of technological connection between sport and psychological interventions.

At the same level, in the future of sport psychology, technological devices are increasingly becoming a tool with which the sports psychologists have to deal with, getting used to new multidisciplinary and integrated approaches. On this theme Thomas Schack, John Elvis Hagan Jr. and Kai Essig in their article highlighted how high-tech devices have led to advantages in sports psychology allowing athletes to reach better training results and coaches to gain more knowledge about training processes with more effectiveness. Devices such as neurofeedback, virtual or augmented reality are described in their contribution to the improvement of the cognitive processes of athletes and serve like diagnostic and training tools. The merging between sports and technology has already seen the rapidly growing of the electronic sports as a new unexplored land where sports psychologists are claimed to make their part, considering the cognitive ability needed in these activities. Samuel García-Lanzo, Iván Bonilla, and Andrés Chamarro, in their article bring information related to e-sports and to how sports psychology applies to the context of competitive gaming. Their evaluation starts with an historical overview from the origin of video gaming as a recreational tool to the recent professional evolution, then they define e-sports discussing its definition, next, they offer an overview of some psychological mechanisms implicated in e-sports that offer great opportunities to sports psychology researchers and consultants.

The changes that the sport psychology is facing refer certainly to technological innovation, but also refer to the changes in the world of sport seen as global. In this sense, globalization occurred in sport practice with its diffusion all over the world and with the increase in different contexts, including amateur and recreational ones. A first reflection on this focus comes from

Jean Côté, Jennifer Turnnidge, Alex Murata, Cailie S. McGuire, and Luc J. Martin. The authors in their article reviewed the prominent lines of research dealing with youth sport development in order to establish a guiding framework for future studies. Within the analysis it is adopted a wide vision of the athlete development considering specific dynamic features such as the interactions of the settings, the social dynamics, and the personal engagement. Furthermore, the evaluation of the role of individual elements, with the inclusion of literature examples, allow the comprehension of mechanisms governing athlete's development. The spread and differentiation of sport practice requires a clear and careful reflection on the issues related to the ethical problems, considering also lower levels of competition. Fabio Lucidi and Andrea Chirico in their contribution, narratively reviewed the literature on doping at different competing levels, with the aim to track future perspectives. The general assumption of the article is that doping behavior partly depends on the dynamic interplay between a set of individual factors, its environment, and the goal that orients the behavior. Relatedly, the authors review most adopted theoretical and research frameworks that indirectly support this general view highlighting the importance of research on doping, encouraging theoretical-based interventions.

Recent world events, including the pandemic, are no stranger to our disciplinary discussion and are certainly a source of debate for the development of adaptation strategies for the physical activity as an inexhaustible source of health. Marlene Silva, Catarina Silva, and António Palmeira evidence in their article the benefits of physical activity and the cross sectoriality that distinguishes this field, highlighting the need to implement effective strategies to promote it. The authors discuss how the advances in exercise psychology and their intersection with health psychology can contribute to public health efforts on addressing the pandemic physical inactivity. The article provides useful examples, including an overview models able to promote physical activity in healthcare settings and the potential of digital tools in this field. Finally, following the changes occurring as global, it is important to frame sport psychology within a cultural key that, precisely in its globalization of sport, sees a different role for culture itself. Michael McDougall, Tatiana V. Ryba, and Noora J. Ronkainen, discuss the role of culture and its use in sport psychology as a concept that needs to be reviewed. With a broad overview taking into account different disciplines (e.g., anthropology, cultural studies, organizational management), the authors strike a theoretical fatal blow to the culture as a meaningful concept in specific fields such as organizational sport psychology and cultural sport psychology. To support their arguments, the authors conclude defining five recommendations that can help to secure the future of culture in sport psychology.